THE CASE FOR REINCARNATION

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A Lecture by the

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L.D.W.

THE question I wish to discuss is whether we have lived before in some other bodily form and whether we may do so again after death.

I certainly shall not press any conclusion upon you and ask you to accept it. My own mind is not finally made up on the matter. It is not a sign of intellectual enlightenment to believe in it or disbelieve in it. Conclusions about it are bound to be speculative. There is no proof.

At the same time, as the wise book of Proverbs tells us (18,[13]), "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."

The doctrine of reincarnation is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, it is a belief of considerable antiquity, going back to the sixth century B.C. for its first expression in the writings of Pherecydes and Pythagoras. Secondly, millions of our fellow human beings believe in it — one hundred and fifty million Buddhists and two hundred and thirty million Hindus, for instance — and thirdly certain problems to which there seem to be no answers, do find a solution or partial solution, if reincarnation is accepted.

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Some have felt that a belief in reincarnation is not compatible with Christian orthodoxy. If this could be substantiated, it would be a formidable indictment, but, in my opinion, it cannot. Let us look at this matter first.

Christ Himself never taught directly the idea of reincarnation, though it was taught by the Essenes, a prominent sect of His day.

Further, Josephus makes reference to it as if it were a common Jewish belief. He wrote in "De Bello Judaico" (2,[8]): "They say that all souls are incorruptible, but that the souls of good men are only removed into other bodies."

Christ seems to me to have referred to it as though it were part of the accepted ideas of His day. He never repudiated or denied it, or taught that it was false.

He greatly admired the Old Testament where it seems hinted at, e.g. Job 1,[21], Ecclesiastes 6,[6], Psalms 126,[6].

What did He mean in Matthew 11,[14], when, speaking of John the Baptist, He said: "This is Elijah which is to come"? Incidentally, John the Baptist was said to have been filled with the Holy Ghost "in his mother's womb." Does this mean that he had

reached in an earlier life a high standard of moral achievement? What else *can* the sentence mean?

Or again, in Mark 9,[11], (cf. Matthew 17,[12],) "They asked Him saying, 'The scribes say that Elijah must come first.' And He said unto them, 'Elijah indeed cometh first, and restoreth all things: and how is it written of the Son of man that He should suffer many things and be set at nought? But I say unto you that Elijah is come, and they have also done unto him whatsoever they listed, even as it is written of him.'"

It would be hard to put into clearer language the idea that John the Baptist was a reincarnation of Elijah.

In Matthew 16,[13] ff. (cf. Luke 9,[18] ff.) we read that Jesus asked His disciples, "'Who do men say that the Son of man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist; some Elijah: and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. . . .'" Obviously, then, the idea of reincarnation was a common one. And though the argument from silence is unconvincing, it is noteworthy that Christ did not rebuke them for talking nonsense, or condemn the idea.

An interesting passage for our study is found in John 9,[2] where we read that a man *born blind* was brought to Jesus with the question: "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" We must not stay with the answer, but we must note the currency of the idea of reincarnation. If it were contemplated that a man *born* blind was being punished by blindness for sin committed, then the sin committed must have been done in an earlier life before he was born into this world.

From the New Testament it cannot be deduced that reincarnation is taught. I feel that the conclusion must be that reincarnation is seen to be a current idea and nowhere in the New Testament is it denied or criticised. The early Church accepted it until the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 553, and then only discarded it by a vote in the proportion of 3 to 2. Even then Origen (in "De Principiis and Contra Celsus"), St. Augustine (in his "Confessions" 1,[6]) and St. Francis of Assisi accepted it.[1]

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[1] *See "The Catholic Encyclopædia," 1909 Ed., Vol. 10, pp. 236-7, under heading "Metempsychosis" and "The Esoteric Tradition" by Dr. G. de Purucker (chapter on "Re-embodiment as taught through the ages"). See also "Studies in Occult Philosophy" by the same author.*

The Rev. G. Nevin Drinkwater, a Liberal Catholic priest, writing in "The Liberal Catholic," says that reincarnation has never been declared

The Albigenses, a so-called heretical sect of Christianity which produced many martyrs, taught reincarnation. It seems to have persisted in Christendom. St. Jerome supported it in his "Letter to Avitus." In the seventeenth century the chaplain to Charles II supported it in "Lux Orientalis," and a famous Bishop of Durham (Dr. Butler) wrote that he himself accepted it. The various texts I have quoted from the Gospels can be taken in other senses, but no unbiased person can deny that it is equally legitimate to interpret them in a reincarnatory sense.

* * * *

The second question I want to ask is whether the idea of reincarnation harmonises with other ideas implicit in Christian teaching.

To this question I feel the answer must be that reincarnation supports some of the great Christian affirmations. Let us look at some of them.

1. The Christian affirms that God is just, that ultimately life is just, that justice is what we call an "eternal value." It will be vindicated at last. No one — if we may put this point popularly — will be able to turn round finally on God and say, "Life wasn't fair to me. I had an unfair deal. I never had a chance."

Now if we take this life as we often see it, how terribly unfair and unjust it seems. I have known people who, humanly speaking, have never had a chance, born with defects that appear to mar their lives, or else meeting with a whole series of misfortunes that shut them off from the happiness others know.

I think of Betty Smith, born into a prosperous home, surrounded by every opportunity, given an ideal education, loving and marrying a man well able to keep her in the same kind of environment, giving her half-a-dozen happy, healthy children, and passing into middle and later life with full health and every possible amenity.

Then I think of Jane Jones, born blind or deaf or crippled,

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heretical by an Ecumenical Council. He writes, "What actually happened, according to Robertson and Hefele, was that a local synod condemned Origen's teachings on pre-existence at Constantinople in 543, and this was not, of course, binding on the universal Church. (Cf. Robertson, 'Church History I,' p. 157; Hefele, 'History of the Councils of the Church IV,' p. 223 ff.) There are cases today of people in the Roman Church accepting reincarnation without being declared heretical."

into a poverty-stricken home, where a drunken father makes life a hell for everyone. Jane cannot escape, can never marry and have her own home, can never be given the things Betty enjoys, and dies early, let us say, of malignant disease. Some will recall Helen Keller and similar cases, but how few they are. Others imagine that "things will be squared up in heaven." Is Betty, then, to suffer in another life because she was happy on earth? What would that do in the matter of justice? Nothing. And certainly it would do Jane no good. Nor is she vindictive or mean enough to desire it. Is Jane to be "rewarded" or "compensated"? But what kind of *compensation* makes up for half a century of earthly misery? We cringe when we hear of a grant of money given to a man wrongfully imprisoned. How can that make up to him for the mental distress, the wasted years, the misery and pain to all his relatives. . . .? These things cannot be "made-up" for.

Is human distress just luck, then? If so, how unjust is life! Is it God's will? Then how unlike any human father He must be, for a human father who thus exerted his will would be clapped into jail.

But if we accept the idea that all these inequalities are the result — in a cosmos of cause and effect — of earlier causes, the product of some distant past, the fruit of earlier choices, then our sense of justice is preserved. The mangled body then is not a greater mystery than the mangled body at the foot of a cliff, mangled because its owner did not look where he was going. We often *do* see suffering which is clearly the result of *recent* folly or ignorance or sin. None of these, but, indeed, their opposites, are the "will of God," viz. wisdom, knowledge and holiness. What if *all* apparently unjust suffering is the result of either recent or older folly, ignorance and sin? "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," may be indeed a law that runs back for the sowing to lives before this and for the reaping to lives after this. The matter is not usefully thought of in terms of rewards and punishments, but of causes and effects, and refers to good as well as to evil happenings in our lives.

* * * *

Let us look at some of the "good" things for which there seems no accounting at all save on the hypothesis of reincarnation.

I list among the good things the ability of a child like the Italian Giannella de Marco, aged eight years. The London *Times* of 13th March, 1953, reported that Giannella conducted the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Albert Hall, London, in works by Weber, Haydn, Wagner and Beethoven. I quote from *The Times:*

> "She plies a clear, generous beat and plainly has the music at her finger-ends. . . . There is an unnerving maturity in her intellectual accomplishment. . . . Her musicianship is surely to be admired, but it were better if, at eight years of age, such gifts were allowed to unfold gradually and quietly."

Speaking of child musicians, the London *Evening Standard* (23rd September, 1953) described a girl of four years of age, Danielle Salamon, who played the piano before she could talk, can play Mozart's works and has composed several pieces of music and written the scores in a book. She is the daughter of English parents living in South Tottenham, London.

Similarly we learn of Sir William Hamilton, who started to learn Hebrew at the age of three, that at the age of seven he was pronounced by one of the Fellows of Trinity College, Dublin, to have shown a greater knowledge of the language than many candidates for a fellowship. At thirteen he could speak thirteen languages. Amongst these, besides the classical and modern European languages, were included Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Hindustani and Malay. At fourteen he wrote a complimentary letter to the Persian Ambassador, who happened to visit Dublin, and the latter said that no one in Britain could have written such a document in the Persian language. At six he would look up from his toys and answer a difficult mathematical problem, and at eighteen the Astronomer Royal of Ireland, Dr. Brinkley, said of him, "I do not say that this young man will be the first mathematician of his age. I say he *is* the first mathematician of his age."[1]

We could all contribute stories of these infant prodigies, but how are we to account for them? Mozart wrote a sonata when he was four and an opera when he was seven. Marcel Lavallard had a picture accepted by the Paris Salon when he was twelve. A boy called Zerah Colburn, in his eighth year could solve difficult mathematical problems. On being asked how many minutes there are in forty-eight years, he gave the correct answer without making a mark on paper.

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[1] *See Dr. Raynor Johnson, "The Imprisoned Splendour," p. 379.*

Is it an accidental grouping of genes that makes a little girl of eight a musician far in advance of grown men and women, who have slaved for many years in that field? Is it a piece of luck that a boy of fourteen can write perfect Persian? If so, life seems unjust as well as chancy. Or is it that they have been here before? Plato believed whole-heartedly in reincarnation, and his famous "Theory of Reminiscence" asserted that "knowledge easily acquired is that which the enduring self had in an earlier life, so that it flows back easily."

We see the problem less definitely, but puzzlingly, in other fields. In the same family some children seem to have a strange wisdom, to be "old souls," to have a maturity beyond their years or an appreciation of some forms of art, whereas some adults behave like silly children, and we find grown women reading nothing but "Peg's Weekly" and grown men made peevish and irritable by losing at "Scrabble." Confucius, that wise old philosopher and founder of a religion which millions still follow, distinguishes those who are "born wise" from those who "learn by toil." (Analects 16,9.)

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2. The intelligent Christian asks not only that life should be just, but that it shall make sense. Does the idea of reincarnation help here? I think it does.

Let us suppose that a very depraved or entirely materialistic person dies. Let us suppose that from a religious point of view he has entirely misused his earth-life. Will his translation to a spiritual plane do all that needs doing? Will it not be like putting a person who has never given himself any chance to understand music, into an everlasting concert, or a person who has never learnt how to appreciate art, into an art gallery from which he cannot escape? Can a man who has entirely neglected spiritual things be happy in a spiritual environment? If you say, "Oh well, he can learn in the next phase" — is there nothing lost by misuse of the earth-life? Doesn't such a speculation make the earth-life meaningless?

Let me take a crude example. Suppose a man lives only for sex, indulges his sex desires without thought of others or of his own higher nature, lives only for sex, can he, having failed to master physical desire, pass on to a higher life of the spirit? I don't think we shall be able to skip the examinations of life like that. It

would be as incongruous and unsound as telling a medical student, who failed his qualifying examination, not to bother, but to go on treating people as if he had qualified. If I fail to pass those examinations in life which can only be taken while I dwell in a physical body, shall I not have to come back and take them again?

This seems relevant not only to matters like sex, but to the physical domination of others. Is Hitler now a bright angel making progress in a purely spiritual realm, or will he not have to come back, perhaps as a slave in a Siberian mine, and take the examination of living in a body all over again and undergoing training by tasting subservience instead of tyrannical despotism and power?

I think it possible, not that *all have* to come back, but that *some* have to, and that many *may* be allowed to return when it dawns on them that such is for them the path of progress. Perhaps they are even allowed to choose their venue. They will doubtless choose in a way which gives them maximum opportunity, so they will choose parents with the right make-up. What looks like heredity, then, may be partly wise choosing on the part of a spirit eager in new circumstances to realise his possibilities.

Bach was born into a very musical family, but why put this down merely to heredity when many great musicians have had unmusical children? Clearly there is nothing inevitable about musical heredity. May the soul now called Bach have chosen the kind of vehicle and environment needed for its further progress and adequate expression? The soul may determine the heredity as much as heredity determines the soul.

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3. The intelligent Christian believes that God is working out a plan in the lives of all men and women, and that the consummation of this plan will mean that His will is "done on earth as it is in heaven."

Now if every birth in the world is the birth of a new soul, I don't see how progress can ever thus be consummated. Each has to begin at scratch and passes away from the life of the earth seventy or eighty years later. How then can there be progress in the innermost things of the heart? We can pass on *some* wisdom and, in outward circumstance, those who follow us can in some ways go on where we left off. They will not have to re-discover electricity or atomic energy. But they *will* have to discover, for

example, each for himself, the vital supremacy of love and how to master selfish desire. Each child is born a selfish little animal, surrounded, it may be, by the enlightened, but not able in character to begin where the most saintly parent left off.

An illustration is provided if one goes back to revisit one's old school. When I did this I found better lighting, better blackboards, better maps, better desks, but two boys were standing outside the headmaster's study waiting to be caned, just as I used to do. The progress is in outward things. It cannot be in inward things as long as naughty boys keep joining the school.

How can a world progress in inner things — which are the most important — if the birth of every new generation fills the world with unregenerate souls full of original sin? There can never be a perfect world unless gradually those born into it can take advantage of lessons learned in earlier lives instead of starting at scratch.

These thoughts make me agree with the late Dean Inge, no mean thinker, who said of the doctrine of reincarnation, "I find it both credible and attractive."

One wonders why men have so readily accepted the idea of a life *after* death and so largely, in the West, discarded the idea of a life *before* birth. So many arguments for a one-way immortality seem to me *cogent* for a two-way life outside the present body.

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Naturally men ask for proof. The doctrine may be attractive, but can it be proved? This is a fair question and it is not proof to say that the doctrine is in harmony with Christian thought, that it provides an answer to many problems, or that it is held by a great number of scholarly men.

The answer must be that there is no proof. Yet, when one adds together some strange pieces of evidence, one is impressed by their cumulative effect.

Let me turn to some of these strange, but true, happenings.

1. We find people writing accurately about matters they have not studied and could not have experienced in their present life. Joan Grant, for instance, wrote books on ancient Egypt with amazing accuracy of detail, afterwards verified by scholars, and she actually claimed that in an earlier incarnation she had been an Egyptian princess. I find it very difficult to explain the facts by any other theory.

2. Again there is the familiar phenomenon which many people have experienced that " they have been through certain experiences before." Readers of the life of Shelley may remember that when walking with friends in a part of the country which he had never before visited, he suddenly said to a companion, " Over that hill, there is a windmill." As they breasted the hill and saw the windmill, Shelley fainted with emotion.

There may be other theories to account for this kind of experience, clairvoyance, for instance, or the alleged wandering of the self during sleep, but reincarnation offers itself as one possible hypothesis.

John Buchan, in his volume of reminiscences called " Memory Hold the Door," says : " I find myself in some scene which I cannot have visited before and which is yet perfectly familiar; *I know that it was the stage of an action in which I once took part and am about to take part again.*" Clearly Mr. Buchan believed that the explanation of such an experience was reincarnation.

Dr. Hereward Carrington, a most trustworthy psychical researcher, tells of a man who visited a castle which he had never read about or seen before, and who stopped before a brick wall and said, " There used to be a door here." No visible evidence of such a door existed. No one present supported the statement, but subsequent enquiry proved that there had been a door at one time, but it had been built up years before. Many stories of this kind exist and point to reincarnation as a possible explanation.

3. Again, there are the remarkable experiences of those who seem to recognise one another, and who are convinced that they have known one another in an earlier life.

I met a married couple in Australia who told me their amazing experience. The lady had many psychic experiences by which she felt certain that none of her girlhood's acquaintances would have any special significance for her, but that if she waited, her true mate would turn up. When she was in her middle thirties, she met her present husband at a public function, and both had an overwhelming and simultaneous conviction that, in an earlier life, they had been man and wife. They have now been happily married for over twenty-five years and both are convinced that this is their second incarnation. A year or two before meeting her husband, the lady had a vivid waking-dream of being in bed after the birth of a child which she never saw. In the dream, her husband had

to leave her in this distress to go on a forlorn hope on behalf of his King. The poignancy of parting was terrible, and in the waking dream — experienced, let me repeat, a year or so before she met her husband — the lady wept bitterly. When she met her husband, she knew that he was the father of this child and the hero of this dream.[1]

4. Side by side with such an experience we can put one like this: Captain and Mrs. Battista, Italians, had a little daughter born in Rome, whom they called Blanche. To help look after this child they employed a French-speaking Swiss "Nannie" called Marie. Marie, the nurse, taught her little charge to sing in French a lullaby song. Blanche grew very fond of this song and it was sung to her repeatedly. Unfortunately Blanche died and Marie returned to Switzerland. Captain Battista writes:

> "The cradle song which would have recalled to us only too painful memories of our deceased child, ceased absolutely to be heard in the house . . . all recollection of (it) completely escaped from our minds."

Three years after the death of Blanche, the mother, Signora Battista became pregnant, and in the fourth month of the pregnancy she had a strange waking-dream. She insists that she was wide awake when Blanche appeared to her and said, in her old, familiar voice, "Mother I am coming back." The vision then melted away. Captain Battista was sceptical, but when the new baby was born in February, 1906, he acquiesced in her being also given the name Blanche. The new Blanche resembled the old in every possible way.

Nine years after the death of the first Blanche, when the second was about six years of age, an extraordinary thing happened. I will use Captain Battista's own words:

> "While I was with my wife in my study which adjoins our bedroom we heard, both of us, like a distant echo, the famous cradle song, and the voice came from the bedroom where we had left our little daughter Blanche fast asleep. . . . We found the child sitting up on the bed and singing with an excellent French accent the cradle song which neither of us had certainly ever taught her. My wife . . . asked her what it was she was singing, and the child, with the utmost promptitude, answered that she was singing a French song. . . ."
>
> "'Who, pray, taught you this pretty song?' I asked her."
>
> "'Nobody; I know it out of my own head,' answered the child, and she ended by singing it gaily as if she had never sung another song in her life."

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[1] *Quoted from "The Imprisoned Splendour" by Dr. Raynor Johnson, who in Melbourne introduced me to the two people concerned.*

The Captain ends with a sentence which, short of calling him a liar, it is hard to set on one side.

> "The reader may draw any conclusion he likes from this faithful narrative of facts to which I bear my personal witness. For myself, the conclusion I draw from them is that the dead return." [1]

I should want to say, "It looks as though, in certain circumstances, the dead are permitted to visit the world again in another body."

Recently a widely-read Sunday newspaper, *The People,* reported an experiment in hypnosis, which seems to me to bear on our theme.[2]

A Liverpool physician, whose name I have since learned, hypnotised a Lancashire housewife called Annie Baker, who had never studied French or been to France and whose education was very ordinary.

Under hypnosis she spoke perfect French, although, the doctor assures us, "she had not the slightest interest or knowledge of the French language, the French Revolution or France itself for that matter."[3]

The patient referred to the death of Marie Antoinette as if it had just happened, and gave her own name as Marielle Pacasse, and that of her husband as Jules.

On waking she spoke of a "dream," as hypnotised patients often do. But when she was questioned *in French,* she said she could not understand a word of what was being said.

While in hypnotic trance she gave the name of a street, in which she purported to have lived, as the Rue de St. Pierre near the Notre Dame Cathedral. When the representative of *The People* made enquiries, he found no such street, but verified that there had been a street of that name in that vicinity one hundred and seventy years ago.

Under hypnosis the woman said she did not understand what tea was. It was almost unknown in France a hundred and seventy years ago. The name Marielle is rare now, but was much in vogue in 1794.

These strange facts would have an adequate explanation if the

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[1] *Quoted from "The Problem of Rebirth," Hon. Ralph Shirley, pp. 54-55 (Rider).*

[2] *19th April, 1959. Quoted by special permission.*

[3] *Letter from the doctor to Mrs. M. C. Peto, dated 28th October, 1959.*

woman Annie Baker were a reincarnation of a Frenchwoman of the seventeen hundreds.

The writer of the article comments: "Perhaps dead people's souls can be reborn in living human people."

A highly educated lady has written to me[1] of some experiences which she had with her son, David, "a charming, but unusual, boy who showed psychic tendencies from a very early age."

I quote from his mother's letter:

"From four years he spoke of an invisible playmate — whom he called his Little Princess. In any difficulty he would say: 'I must ask my Little Princess.' We identified this figure later with my husband's ancestors — and do indeed believe he could see and hear her.

"At the age of seven he went to Rome with me to visit my grandmother — who stayed in Italy a great deal. On this occasion we met a noted archæologist who took us to see a newly excavated Roman villa, on the outskirts of Naples. David became extremely excited, and ran about till he found a Roman bath. The edge of the bath was made of polished blue tiles about five inches square. These tiles were engraved with the signs of the Zodiac. David knelt down, and called out: 'Here's our bath, and our tiles — mine had a bull on it and the fish was Marcus'.' As he said the name 'Marcus' he burst into floods of tears and called out: 'Take me away, Mummy, take me away — it was all so terrible, I can't bear it.'

"On another occasion we were visiting some caves in Guernsey which had been used at one time as prisons for French soldiers. David tapped on the wall stating that there was another cave there where a young man had been walled in. *He had watched it being done.* The existence of this cave was denied by the authorities. But as David persisted, giving the name of the prisoner, we asked for information.

"Eventually, steps were taken and the walls were tapped for any thin place which could have been the outline of a door. The door was found: it had been bricked up. Stretched out on the floor was the skeleton of a man. When the archives were searched, the name David had given was correct.

"These incidents were so much a natural part of David's life that it is very difficult to sort them out as anything unusual.

"But about the age of fourteen I accompanied him to look at some mummies in the British Museum. I felt it was asking for trouble, but, to my surprise David was quite calm. He approached a sarcophagus and after looking at it, he remarked that there should be three initials on the underside of the case and that they were in a sort of white paint.

"I asked him if he could draw these initials. He took a pencil and paper and drew three Egyptian birds. 'That was my name,' he said, 'but you weren't there then. I was a kind of inspector; I had to mark the coffins if they were satisfactory.'"

These strange happenings seem to have no adequate interpretation other than that of reincarnation, which in some people of

[1] *Letter written in London under date 28th October, 1959.*

an unusual psychic make-up are remembered from one life to another if sufficient stimulation occurs.

I may add that David's mother has a University degree in a scientific faculty, but had no knowledge of the occult nor of psychic matters until after David's death at an early age in 1935.

It would not be fair to advance any of these illustrations if they were isolated. I can only vouch for the fact that the literature of this subject abounds in similar well-authenticated stories. Paramhansa Yogananda in his "Autobiography of a Yogi," tells a striking story of a similar kind to that of Captain Battista. Men feel they have visited a place before, that is common enough (a striking instance is that of Shanti Devi of Delhi, who described, and later identified, buildings in a city, Muttra, she had never visited, five hundred miles from Delhi) but they manifest information that they have not acquired, like Joan Grant's detailed knowledge of life in Egypt three thousand years before Christ. Men confront a wall and "remember" there was a door in it, which turns out to have been true centuries earlier. Geniuses show powers which could not have been acquired at such an early age, and a child of six, who has never learned French, sings a French cradle-song which no one has taught her. All these stories have numerous parallels. There is room for doubt, of course. But not of all of them added together. And to the doubter the challenge is rightly made: "Very well; given that these things happen — and that cannot be doubted — what is your own explanation?"

If you believe, as I do, that the poets in a matter like this ought to be heard, you will be interested to note their testimony.

Here for example, is the Poet Laureate himself — John Masefield:—

> "I hold that when a person dies,
> His soul returns again to earth;
> Arrayed in some new flesh-disguise
> Another mother gives him birth.
> With sturdier limbs and brighter brain
> The old soul takes the road again."

Says Dante Gabriel Rossetti:—

> "I have been here before,
> But where or how I cannot tell;
> I know the grass beyond the door,
> The sweet, keen smell,
> The sighing sound; the lights around the shore
> You have been mine before,
> How long ago I may not know;

But just when at that swallow's soar
Your neck turned so,
Some veil did fall—I knew it all of yore."

Browning has no more moving poem than the one addressed to the beautiful girl of sixteen, Evelyn Hope, who died, but whom he claimed as a twin soul :—

" Just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so wide
Each was nought to each, must I be told?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside:"

He replies to his own questioning :—

" I claim you still for my own love's sake.
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse not a few;
Much is to learn, much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.
But the time will come."

I must be content with very few selections from the poets, but one could add F. W. H. Myers, both on his own account and when he translates " Virgil." Both support reincarnation.

Tennyson meets a friend and is sure that they have been friends in an earlier incarnation. Listen to this :—

" So friend, when first I looked upon your face,
Our thoughts gave answer each to each, so true
Opposed mirrors each reflecting each,
Although I knew not in what time or place,
Methought that I had often met with you,
And each had lived in others' mind and speech."

Tennyson returns to the same idea again :—

" As when with downcast eyes we muse and brood
And ebb into a former life or seem,
To lapse far back in a confused dream
To states of mystical similitude,
If one but speaks or hems or stirs a chair,
Ever the wonder of it waxeth more and more,
So that we say, All this hath been before,
All this *hath* been, I know not when or where."

Walt Whitman, Longfellow, Swinburne, W. E. Henley, Morris, Rudyard Kipling — all have been quoted in support of reincarnation. It is an impressive witness, and to the poets, Dean Inge, in " God and the Astronomers " (pp. 290), tells us we can add James Ward, Professor of Mental Philosophy at Cambridge ' Some Dogmas of Religion ' Maeterlinck, Ibsen, Lavater, Schopenhauer, Hume, Goethe, and in the ancient world Cicero, Seneca, Pythagoras and Plato. A belief held by so many and by such distinguished thinkers is not to be brushed lightly aside, especially when it throws light

on some otherwise very dark problems, though I admit, of course, that some alternative hypothesis — such as access to an imagined cosmic pool of memory — may yet explain the phenomena.

* * * *

We must pass finally to face some of the criticisms of the theory of reincarnation not covered by what is already written.

1. The commonest is — "But if I don't remember past incarnations, what is the point? I might as well be another person altogether."

I find this objection unintelligent. What more likely than that the formation of a new body means for most people the obliteration of the memories of an earlier life? Further, we cannot remember much of our own early years. Yet any psychologist would stress their importance. They would have no importance if they happened to another person, but they happened to us, they determined our reaction to life, they fixed — only too firmly some of us think — the character pattern of our whole life. What is that pattern but a form of stored memory? We don't need to remember them to be influenced by them. The fruit of experience doesn't depend on remembering the details. Thank God we can — and tend to — forget the unpleasant.

If in an earlier bodily life I was the kind of poor specimen which I must have been if this life is an improvement on it, then I am glad I don't have to remember it, even if I suffer the effects of faulty reactions made during it.

2. A second objection seems to have more point. It runs thus: "But I count on meeting my dear ones again after death." "Supposing," writes a friend of mine, "that my dear one has gone back to be an Italian organ-grinder and I am robbed of the joys of re-union." More seriously a friend writes, "Didn't Christ promise to be with the dying thief that same day in Paradise? Supposing the thief was reincarnate in some other body."

Christ did thus speak and the words are amongst the most precious in the world. For me they take away all fear of not meeting my loved ones again. But no one in all the literature of reincarnation suggests that it follows the earth-life at once. Much

has to be learned on a different plane first. It may be, however, that — counting in earth time — after a hundred years or so, the soul may feel that the only way to progress — a progress for which he increasingly hungers — is to do what I have called "taking again the exams that he failed on earth." Joan Grant, whose books I commend to you as fascinating, particularly her autobiography called "Time Out of Mind," puts five thousand years between her two incarnations. Dr. Alexander Cannon, in his book, "Powers That Be," speaks of an average interval of a thousand earth years between each earth-life, during which interval astral life is lived on other planets.

3. A third objection is, to my mind, not nearly as cogent as it can be made to sound. "But," says the objector, "I should lose my identity in a number of incarnations."

I don't think you will, any more than you have lost it already half-a-dozen times. You are William Tompkins, let us suppose. All right. You are the little, runny-nosed Willie Tompkins that got tanned for being late at school. Do you want to keep your identity with him? You are the Will Tompkins who wrote those wet verses and slipped them into the hand of that girl of sixteen with blonde plaits. Do you want to assert your identity with him? You are the William Tompkins who got sacked for being unable to account for money received on behalf of the firm. Do you feel robbed if he passes out of your sense of identity? You are W. Tompkins, with rheumatic joints and poor hearing and peering sight, whose body is now a nuisance. Try this experiment: Say "William Tompkins, William Tompkins, William Tompkins" over to yourself aloud a hundred times. Imagine a hundred thousand angels all round you doing the same thing. All heaven chanting "William Tompkins." Is it really important that the whole personality of Tompkins should go on for a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand years? Still William Tompkins. . . .!

An actor in his life-time plays many parts and wears many costumes. I don't want to be "identified" with one part, let alone one costume called "my present body." I am a very different person — in body, mind and spirit — from the man I was a score of years ago. I want to be the player who has been made a better actor by every part that he has played, and I want the *play* to

be a success, not just my acting, and Life is God's play, and — in parentheses — no one can wisely judge a play by one act. Surely William Tompkins living at 18 Slugger Row, Wigan, is only a temporary expression of an immortal soul able to be expressed in other incarnations.

Our true identity will not be lost, the pure gold of the ego will be maintained and strengthened. But why this emphasis on separateness? I have a hunch — and it can only be that — that we may lose our separateness in a new context of closer relationship; glad to be nameless members of a team.

I don't want to be one note sounding on alone. What a nauseating thought. If I could be one note in a glorious symphony, would it not be well for separateness to be lost in symphony?

And, to use the favourite figure of the Buddhist, would it really matter if I were lost like a drop of water in the ocean, if I could be one shining particle in some glorious wave that broke in utter splendour and in perfect beauty on the shores of an eternal sea?

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

Since the original edition, "The Case for Reincarnation" has been revised and new testimonies added; one by a Liverpool physician and another by the scientifically qualified mother of a psychic child. A new design has been drawn for the cover, by which it is intended to convey the expansion of awareness brought to the reader by this philosophy.

Printing of the lecture was prompted by the publisher's inner urge that its message should be spread further afield, and this conviction has been amply justified. A first edition of 2,000 copies was originally contemplated, but while this was still under consideration, it became increasingly obvious that this quantity would be inadequate and eventually 10,000 copies were issued. Neither these, nor a reprint of a further 10,000 copies, widely distributed in this country and overseas, met the demand. This booklet is the third impression bringing the total number of copies printed to 30,000.

The imaginative word-pictures and honesty of approach bring to this work the reality and sincerity that have helped to make Dr. Weatherhead one of the great preachers and pastoral healers of our time. His popularity as a broadcaster and TV personality, together with his remarkable success as an author of many books in the field of religion/psychology, have enabled him to reach a still wider public.

The bibliography has been added following many requests. It does not claim to be comprehensive.